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February 22, 2007

MEDIA RELEASE

ENVIRONMENTAL GROUP LEADERS JOIN MAYOR IN SUPPORT OF NEW WATER AND WASTEWATER RATES

PROJECTS FUNDED BY NEW RATES WILL HELP PROTECT SENSITIVE HABITAT AND WATERSHED AREAS IN THE CITY

Leaders from San Diego's most active environmental groups have joined Mayor Jerry Sanders in calling for approval of the package of water and wastewater rate increases coming before the City Council on February 26. The environmental leaders joined the Mayor to voice support for the projects to be funded by the proposed rate increases and in pointing out the environmental problems being caused when the City's aging water and wastewater systems fail.

Standing near a storm drain outfall north of the Maritime Museum on San Diego Bay, Mayor Sanders was joined by **Bruce Reznik**, Executive Director of San Diego Coastkeeper; **Jim Peugh**, Conservation Chair for the San Diego Audubon Society and **Marco Gonzalez**, Partner with the Coast Law Group which represents the Surfrider Foundation and San Diego Coastkeeper.

The group chose the bay-front location for their announcement because the storm drain has been the exit point for sewage spills and pollution coming from broken water mains further inland. When they occur, these breaks and spills push pollutants into the Bay and have, on occasion, forced the closure of the popular Maritime Museum attractions.

"We need to do what we can to protect our environment from pollution by improving the City's infrastructure," said Mayor Sanders. "The projects we will fund with the rate increases being proposed for our water and wastewater systems are a critical part of our effort to keep pollution out of this Bay and other environmentally sensitive areas," said the Mayor. "I am honored that these community leaders are joining me in getting that message out and in voicing support for projects that will cut down on the sewage spills and water main breaks that spread pollutants," he said.

Revenues from the new rates being proposed will allow the City to finance projects associated with meeting the water system's Compliance Order from the California Department of Health Services. The water system will also be able to fund projects to meet mandates under the Federal Safe Drinking Water Act that require the City to rehabilitate or replace deteriorating pipelines.

The new rates will allow the City's wastewater system to fund projects related to meeting the conditions of a Final Consent Decree issued by the Federal Court that must be signed by the City no later than June 30, 2007. That Decree will require the City to initiate a series of improvements at its pump stations and to replace miles of wastewater pipelines.

The costs for all of these required improvements have been accumulating due to the City's inability to access public finance markets to fund incremental improvements over the past few years.

"These systems are, quite simply, falling apart," said Mayor Sanders. "Over the past five years we have had more than 600 water main breaks and 633 sewage spills," he said. "Replacing these pipes is an important part of the preventative maintenance efforts included in the schedule of projects to be funded with the proposed rate adjustment. That effort is going to make a big difference in our ability to avoid washing pollution into San Diego Bay," he said.

Pipeline replacement and rehabilitation is one of the largest elements being recommended in the schedule of improvement efforts for both the water and wastewater systems and is planned to affect hundreds of miles of pipe over the next four years.

Major upgrades to the water treatment facilities at Otay, Alvarado and Miramar will also be undertaken. Large trunk sewers will be replaced. New water mains will also be installed to replace the crumbling cast iron mains reaching the end of their serviceable lifespan.

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